Dr. *MEGGOTT's*

SERMON

Preached before the

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AT

HAMPTON-COURT,

July 14th. 1689.

By *RICHARD MEGGOTT* D.D.
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ROMANS 12. 5.

—We being many are one Body in Chriſt, and every one Members one of another.

LActantius will have the word *Religio* to come from *Religo*, which ſignifieth to *bind*; becauſe it *bindeth* and uniteth the Hearts of Men not only to God, but to one another too.

This is the Effect of it, in ſome degree, in all the Religions that are: every one looking upon himſelf as having a ſtricter tye on him, towards thoſe of the ſame Religion with him, than he hath

hath to the reſt of Mankind. But the Chriſtian Religion may give peculiar Countenance to ſuch a Derivation; the Nature and Principles of it being above any framed and ſuited for promoting it.

So it appeared among its Primitive Profeſſors. O! the Entire Agreement! the Tender Affection! the Cordial Amity which the ſenſe of this begot and cheriſhed in them towards one another! No humorous Sects, no angry Factions, no proud cenſorious Schiſms then, to eſtrange, to ſowre, to ſeparate them. *They all continued with one accord in Prayers and Supplications*, Acts 1. 14. *With one accord in one place*, Acts 2. 1. *With one accord in the Temple and breaking Bread*, Acts 2. 46. Thus it was as long as Sincerity excluded Secular Intereſts, and the Truths of God were unmingled with the Arts of Men.

But (alas!) we do not ſo often in the Acts of the Apoſtles read of their *one accord*, as in all Eccleſiaſtical Writers ſince, we do of their fierce and ſcandalous *Diſcords*. *Diſcords* about *Doctrine*, *Diſcords* about *Diſcipline*, *Diſcords* about *Ceremonies*: and where other Countries and Kingdoms have had their Thouſands; we, unhappy we, have had, O that there were no reaſon to add, have, our ten Thouſands. All

All kind of courſes, Chriſtian, and I had like to have ſaid, Unchriſtian, have been taken to put an end to them, but with ſo little effect all, that inſtead of being rooted out by them, they have rather run up to ſeed and multiplied. This were enough to diſhearten from attempting any thing further in it, when all that hath been tryed hath proved ſo unſucceſsful: But Peoples not doing their Duty, is no reaſon why we ſhould ceaſe to tell them of it; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, if we cannot perſwade them, however we muſt diſcharge our ſelves: and that I think we are very particularly obliged to in this Juncture of Time, when Differences cannot but prove Fatal, as they are Sinful.

That which every Man pleadeth for himſelf is *Conſcience*, I am willing to hope it is ſo; for I have ſomething to ſay to that, which I am ſure muſt be of more force to Unite, than any thing that can be alledged is to Divide us: And that is the conſideration of the Sacredneſs and nearneſs of our common relation, both to Chriſt, and among our Selves. It is as unnatural for Chriſtians to quarrel, as for the Tongue to rail at the Eye, the Hand to ſcratch the Face, one Foot to kick or tread upon the other; for as the Body is one and

hath

hath many Members, *ſo we being many are one Body in Chriſt, and every one Members one of another.*

In which Declaration of the Apoſtle, we have two Things obſervable.

Firſt, The Chriſtian's myſtical *Union.* All that in every place profeſs his Name, how many ſoever they be, are parts of Chriſt's Body, *being many they are one Body in Chriſt.*

Secondly, Their Spiritual *Communion* reſulting from it; all being one and the ſame Corporation, they ought to live in mutual Conjunction, Correſpondence, and Fellowſhip; every one as *Members one of another.*

I begin with the firſt of theſe, The Chriſtian's myſtical *Union.* That all that in every place profeſs his Name, how many ſoever they be, are Parts of Chriſt's Body, *being many they are one Body in Chriſt.*

As Chriſt hath a *Natural* Body, that which was conceived by the Holy Ghoſt, born of the Virgin *Mary*, crucified upon the Croſs, and is now aſcended into Heaven; ſo, he hath a *Myſtical* one too: and this is an Aggregation or Collection of all throughout the face of the Earth, who embrace the Faith he hath delivered. As many Officers and Soldiers are but one Army, many Houſes and Streets

Streets but one City, many Pariſhes and Counties but one Kingdom; ſo as many as profeſs Chriſtianity are but *one Body* in him: ſo they are called the *Body of Chriſt*, Epheſ. 4. 12.

True, we read in the Scriptures of *Churches* in the *Plural* Number: the *Churches* of *Judæa*, the *Churches* of *Samaria*, the *Churches* of *Aſia*, and the like, ſpeaking as of *many*: but it is not unworthy your obſerving, that our Saviour in his Promiſe hath it in the *Singular*, Mat. 16. 18. *Upon this Rock I will build my Church*, ſpeaking of it as of *one*. And why ſo, but to ſhow us, that tho' they are ſeveral in reſpect of their diſtant ſituation, ſeveral in reſpect of their circumſtantial conſtitution; yet they are not ſeveral, in reſpect of Chriſt's great Intention, or their own ſpecifick Nature, but have the ſame dependance upon, and relation to, their Head and one another, as Parts have to their Whole; ſo that how many ſoever they be nominally, they are one really, *one Body in Chriſt*.

There are Three things that ſpeak, and ought to make us ſo.

Firſt, *One* we are in our Original ſacred Deſignation. As Chriſtians we are all [redacted] Parts of one and the ſame Building whereof Chriſt Jeſus is the corner ſtone, 1 *Pet.* 2. 6. we are all Branches of

one and the ſame Vine whereof Chriſt Jeſus is the root, *John* 15. 1. we are all Servants in one and the ſame Houſhold whereof Chriſt Jeſus is the Maſter, *Gal.* 6. 10. we are all Sheep of one and the ſame Fold whereof Chriſt Jeſus is the *Shepherd*, Heb. 13. 20. we are all Subjects of one and the ſame Kingdom whereof Chriſt Jeſus is the Prince, *Iſaiah* 9. 6. Hence the Apoſtle taketh his topick of Addreſs to the diſſenting *Corinthians*, 1 *Cor.* 1. 10. *I beſeech you, Brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that ye all ſpeak the ſame thing, that there be no Diviſions among you*, &c. *by the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt?* Why, this was the Pretence for all their Diviſions and Separations, they were the *Truths* of *Chriſt*, the *Ordinances* of *Chriſt*, the *Miniſters* of *Chriſt*, that they contended for: yes, ſo Men may talk to others, and it may be flatter themſelves; but there is no Name under Heaven can be pleaded for quarrels, more improperly and indecently among Chriſtians indeed; for if we are ſuch, as Lines of the ſame Circle, whatſoever diſtance there is in the Circumferenc[illegible] all meet and unite in him, as in our common centre.

Moſes ſeemed to think it enough to make the two *Iſraelites* that were ſtriving, at one again; to

ſay

ſay to them, *Sirs, ye are Brethren.* Here is that and a great deal more: we are not only of one Family, but one Body; and if the Spirit which giveth Life be in us, we ſhall be ſo far any of us from angry rending our ſelves from the reſt, that it will not be without feeling real Grief and Pain, when any other Parts do. Who can loſe a Limb and not be affected with it? Now all that call upon the Name of Jeſus, being our fellow-Members we ſhould be as tender of, and as concerned for them.

This Myſtery *Athanaſius* telleth us our Bleſſed Lord did Figure by the Death he was put to. He was not (ſaith he) Beheaded as *John* the Baptiſt, nor ſawn aſunder as the Prophet *Eſay:* no, not a Bone of him was broken, not a Member ſevered; to ſhow the intended and neceſſary adherence and conjunction, that was for ever to be preſerved and maintained among all his faithful Followers, not only with him, but with one another too. And that is a firſt thing wherein being many we are one, one in our Original ſacred Deſignation. Athan. *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei.*

Secondly, One we are in the *Fundamentals and Eſſentials of our Profeſſion.* It is a great Miſtake to think that every Difference in Religion is a different Religion, 1 *Cor.* 3. 11, 12. the Apoſtle carefully diſtinguiſheth between the Foundation and

that which is Built upon it. Some parts of the Superſtructure may be of richer Materials, *Gold*, *Silver*, *Precious Stone*: others of baſer and much ſlighter, *Wood*, *Hay*, *Stubble*, and yet the Foundation the ſame to both. To ſtrip his meaning from the Metaphor it is wrapt in, ſome Churches are more ſound and pure, others more corrupt and ſuperſtitious in their Doctrines: and as in materia Buildings, ſome of the Rooms may be darker than others, yet all of them belong to one Houſe: ſo is it in this Spiritual Building too; all have not equal light, and yet as St. *Paul* phraſeth it, *Eph.* 20. All *built upon the Foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner Stone, in whom all the Building fitly framed together, groweth up an holy Temple to the Lord.*

Should we take a ſurvey of the diſtinct Profeſſions of Chriſtianity, that have any noted Name in the ſeveral Quarters of the World; as thoſe of the *Roman Catholick* in the Weſt, of the *Æthiopick* in the South, of the *Greeks* in the Eaſt, of the *Proteſtant* here in the North: and laying aſide thoſe Points wherein they differ from one another; gather into one Body but thoſe Articles wherein they univerſally agree: we ſhall find that in thoſe Propoſitions ſo much Truth is contain

as being joyned with a ſincere and Pious Life, the ſober and moderate of all Denominations grant ſufficient to Salvation.

For tho ſome hot heads and narrow minds of all perſwaſions, lay ſuch ſtreſs upon their particular tenents, as to be ready to damn all that come not punctually up to them; this exceſs of zeal is only perſonal: no Church in the World (bate that of *Rome*) is ſo uncharitable in her cenſures. So far was the Ancient Church from it, that all the *Credenda* ſhe required of them ſhe admitted to her Communion, for ſome Ages, was only an acknowledgment of the Articles of the *Creed* we call the *Apoſtles*, and preſſed no more on them: and tho all Churches ſince have added others; ſome more, ſome leſs: it appeareth by their not judging one another, about receiving or not receiving them, this is not ſo much from any opinion they have of the abſolute neceſſity of holding thoſe Articles, as of the abſolute neceſſity of preſerving peace among their own members, who were like to make diſturbances about them.

Now ſo far all the Chriſtians that are, are agreed, even they who have ſuper-induced doctrines ſcarce conſiſtent with theſe (to give them their due) retain theſe, and tho we cannot clear them

them from contradicting themſelves, yet we muſt from denying any of theſe principles; ſo that our heats about matters of Religion, are ſomething like our heats about matters of the World; not ſo much for the neceſſaries of life which we are eaſily ſupplied with; as the unneceſſaries of fancy, which our Reaſon telleth us, we may be happy enough tho we never have. Our contentions are not about the great vital truths of Chriſtianity; hereunto we have all attained; but ſome additional notions, which, if they ſhould be true, our Conſciences tell us, men may be ſaved, tho they don't believe; and that is another reſpect in which being many, we are *one*; *One*, in the fundamentals and eſſentials of our profeſſion.

Once more *One* we are in *our only juſtifiable and real intereſts.* Intereſt is the mighty make-bate of mankind, more ſucceſsful than whiſpering in ſeparating chief friends. Intereſt is deaf as the Adder to the faireſt overtures of Peace, and will carry off the ſtrongeſt obligations to unity, eaſily as *Sampſon* did the Gates of *Gaza:* Intereſt will ſet the Son at variance againſt the Father, and the Father againſt the Son, the Mother againſt the Daughter, and the Daughter againſt the Mother. But there is nothing of that to interpoſe

and

and make miſchief here. For what is the *intereſt* of any *Chriſtian*, that is not the *intereſt* of all? The glory of God, the Salvation of our Souls, the Edification of the Church, theſe are all the inte-reſts of *Chriſtians*, conſidered as Chriſtians; and theſe are common to us all equally.

It is pretended on all ſides, that theſe are the only things they aim at, that it is the conſideration of theſe maketh them ſtand upon their points ſo ſtiffly, and contend ſo earneſtly each againſt their oppoſites: but who that reflecteth either upon the matters moſt conteſted, or the manner of our conteſting them, can bring himſelf to credit it?

If this were really ſo, that the deſign on all hands were only, that Religion and Devotion, Vertue and ſobriety might be advanced, & flouriſh in the world; that God might be more honoured upon earth, and ſinners kept from periſhing everlaſtingly; our zeal, doubtleſs, would be hotter againſt vices of all ſorts, which men can help, than errors, which (may be, they cannot: and where-ever faith and good works are maintained and regarded in the main, tho there are viſible defects and allays, they would be compaſſionately and prudently bore with, for the good that is found in them.

This

This was S. *Paul's* both judgment and practice, in a caſe, as obnoxious it may be, as any can be inſtanced in. There were a ſort of men, who not from any concern for the propagation of the Goſpel, but ſpite at his reputation among the people, to leſſen and ruine both it and him; ſet up in oppoſition, heading any diſorderly and diſcontented meetings. Now, how doth he take it? tho he himſelf ſaw well enough through the wretched deſigns of the ring-leaders, the vile and ſelfiſh ends they had in it; yet inaſmuch as it might have ſome good effects upon ſeveral poor creatures that did not, he is ſo far from being diſturbed, that he declareth himſelf well pleaſed with it, *Phil.* 1. 15, 16, 17, 18. *Some* (ſaith he) *preach Chriſt even of envy and ſtrife, of contention, not ſincerely. What then? notwithſtanding every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Chriſt is preached, and I therein do rejoyce, yea and will rejoyce.*

I do not doubt but they are much in the wrong, who uſe this Text as an argument for all ſorts of Preachers among us now; there is not the ſame reaſon for it where the Goſpel is planted, as where it was to be planted, in a ſettled Church, as in a Heathen Country. Yet this I ſay, if the ſame Spirit that dwelt in him, dwell in us; where the good

good that cometh by it, will but preponderate the evil, we ſhall not be otherwiſe affected.

It was a notable paſſage of my Lord *Bacon*, that If Divines could but agree upon the expoſition of thoſe two ſayings of our Saviour, *he that is not with me is againſt me*, and *he that is not againſt us is on our part*, it might well put an end to all the controverſies among Chriſtians: certain it is, it ought. For as whatever doth more diſhonour to Chriſt, than ſervice, we are alike concerned to depreſs: ſo whatever doth more ſervice to him, than diſhonour, we are alike concerned to promote. If we do not, thinking men will be apt to conclude, it is nothing but our different intereſts as *men*, is at the bottom of it. For that is another thing, wherein as *Chriſtians* being many, we are *one*; *one in our only juſtifiable and real intereſts*, that we ought to look after.

Mat. 12. 30. Mark 9. 40.

And this is all I ſhall ſay to the firſt part of the Text, the *Chriſtians myſtical union*; that all that in every place profeſs his name, how many ſoever they be, are *one body in Chriſt!* By which we ſee, what apprehenſions we ſhould have of, and what behaviour to, all thoſe of our Religion, even tho they differ from us.

The other obſervable I am now to proceed to, is the means to remedy the differences themſelves; and that is by maintaining ſuch *communion* among our ſelves as properly reſulteth from this *Union*. Being one and the ſame corporation, we ought to live in mutual conjunction, correſpondence, and fellowſhip, every one as members one of another.

This Chriſtians formerly were ſo very ſenſible of, that they did not think it ſufficient, that each particular Church ſhould be at unity within it ſelf only, but they wiſely contrived that all the particulars ſhould ſo agree with one another too, as to make up one harmonious Catholick; and thus by Eccleſiaſtical Canons they ordained it: That all Presbyters ſhould give account of the ſtate of their ſeveral flocks to their Biſhops, the Biſhops of their ſeveral Dioceſſes to their Metropolitans, the Metropolitans of their ſeveral Provinces to their Patriarchs, the Patriarchs of all theſe, and of themſelves too, to one another. Thus as much as in them lay, they took care; every one for all, and all for every one, that there might be no Schiſm in the body. And however it is now diſuſed, and as the preſent ſtate of the World is, in great part unpracticable; yet there is the ſame reaſon

Spalat. de Reput. l. 7. c. 10.

rerſon for it ſtill. As we ſtand in the ſame relation to Chriſt as the Chriſtians of former ages, ſo we do to one another too; and ought to be as ſollicitous to preſerve it.

It is a Duty, the peace and welfare, quiet and good order, of Maſters and their Families, Miniſters and their Pariſhes, People and their Neighbours, Princes and their Subjects, yea, Princes and Princes, doth very highly depend upon. Few here can be of ſo little obſervation, as not to be ſenſible of the inconveniencies, the fewds, the diſtractions, the miſchiefs, that the rejecting and condemning each others communion, hath been either the cauſe, or the occaſion, or at leaſt the pretence of, among every one of theſe.

Seeing then 'tis of ſuch conſequence, not only to private perſons, but the publick too; ſure it behoveth every one in their ſtations, to look that none of theſe offences come by them, but that they ſo behave themſelves towards all in every place, that call upon the name of the Lord Jeſus, both theirs and ours, as to their fellow members.

This all will allow a deſirable thing; but the great queſtion is, How it is poſſible? How we can hold communion with all other Chriſtians? This is neceſſary to be enquired into, and reſolved particularly in theſe caſes.

Firſt, in the caſe of that particular Church, which each perſon doth regularly belong to, how he is to behave himſelf as a member of that?

Secondly, in the caſe of other Churches diſtant from, and independent on us, how we ſhould behave our ſelves as Members of them?

Thirdly, in the caſe of ſuch Chriſtians, as upon diſſatisfaction divide from, and will not joyn with us, how we ſhould behave our ſelves towards them?

Theſe comprehending the moſt conſiderable difficulties that can ariſe about this duty, I will ſpeak diſtinctly of them.

The firſt caſe to be reſolved is, about the particular Church, which any perſon doth regularly belong to, how he is to behave himſelf as a member of that? That I call every mans particular Church, not which it may be he himſelf doth call ſo, but which the lawful Authority of the Country where he liveth, hath made ſo. This, (if he may acceptably ſerve God, and finally ſave his Soul in) he is to joyn himſelf to, owning the Guides, partaking the Ordinances, obſerving the Conſtitutions of it, or he doth not walk orderly.

Too many well-meaning people among us, are not ſo ſenſible of this as they ought, but think 'tis no matter tho' they do not, that tho' they are obliged to hear and pray, and receive; yet they have no more obligation to perform theſe duties there, than with any other Aſſembly of Chriſtians, that they have as good, or it may be, better opinion of.

For ſuch to ſay that they agree with the Church in *Doctrinals*, it is only upon account of *Ceremonies*, that they ſeparate I needs muſt ſay, ſeemeth to me ſo far from excuſing the thing, it really maketh it worſe. For though it is our Duty to ſeparate from a Church, where ſhe is corrupt in her Doctrines, and maketh *void the Commandments* of God by *her Traditions* : Yet where it is not ſo much as pretended to be ſo, to do it meerly upon the ſcore of ceremony, is not to be defended. For where? When could ſuch Perſons have liv'd? In what Place? In what Age? In what Eſtabliſhed Church that now is? Or heretofore hath been? That upon this Principle they muſt not have divided from? There is none but have determined ſomething or other of this kind. It is granted, that every Church in determining and appointing them, ought to have a careful, tender,

prudent

prudent consideration of the temper, the weakness, the circumstances of them she determineth and appointeth them for, but if she should have been faulty in it, and hath not; it is a greater fault, rather to break her peace, than bear with them.

And therefore tho the *Recusants* here in *England* are greater *Schismaticks* than any other *Separatists* among us; because whereas others for the most part only forbear communion with our Church, these condemn the Church it self: yet neither can any of the other that separate well clear themselves from being such; it being the strict and proper notion of Schism for Persons causelesly to rend themselves from that particular Church whereof *de jure* they are Members.

How they under whose Spiritual Conduct such Persons put themselves, can satisfie their own Minds in entertaining them, I know not. This I am sure of, it is more than the *Pope* himself anciently would take upon him. It is a famous Answer which one of them geve to *Marcion* when in opposition to his own Church he came to *Rome*, and sued to be admitted into Communion there, that he could not do it, without the consent of his venerable Father, between whom and him there was one Faith.

οὐ δυνάμεθα ἄνευ τῆς ἐπιτροπῆς τοῦ τιμίου πατρὸς σοῦ τοῦτο ποιῆσαι μία γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ πίστις, &c. *Epiphan. adv. Hær. Vol. 1. Tom. 3. Hær. 42.*

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The 12*th* Canon among the Apoſtolick, forbidding under the Penalty of Excommunication, the receiving any under the Cenſures of *their own Church*, without Letters Commendatory, was confirmed by the firſt famous Council of *Nice*, and the Biſhop of *Rome* then thought himſelf no more exempted from it, than the reſt of his Brethren: And tho now for a long while by a diſpenſing Power they have acted otherwiſe, it is an inſolent trampling upon that Rule their Predeceſſors walked by. Now they that do the ſame thing, how oppoſite ſoever they may be to the Pope in other Matters, in this his Uſurpation agree with him, and can no more be juſtified in it than he; being no more able to ſhow by *what Authority they do theſe things*. I might confront ſuch Perſons Practice with their Judgment, when in other Circumſtances, but I ſpare them. I will only ſay, it is an inlet to Diſorder. Now *God is not the Author of Confuſion, but of Peace, as in all the Churches of the Saints*. And ſo much for the firſt caſe, how far Chriſtians are to behave themſelves as Members of that particular Church they regularly belong to. Canon 5*th*. *Conc. Nic.*

The ſecond is the caſe of other Churches diſtant from, and independent on us; how we ſhould behave

behave our ſelves as Members of them? St. *Paul* *Eph.* 4. 4, 5, 6. telleth us by what ſacred Bands and Ligaments we are knit and faſtned to all theſe. *There is* (ſaith he) *one Body and one Spirit, one Hope of your Calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* Theſe are the ſame to all of us. And therefore, tho there be much variety in their *Rituals*, in their *Diſcipline*, yea, even *Doctrines* of inferiour Nature; every Church ought mutually to allow and bear them in each other, without cenſuring or reproaching one another concerning them.

They who were ſo ſuperciliouſly Arrogant as to condemn all other Churches, that did not in all things exactly chime in with them, ſuch as the *Novatians*, *Donatiſts*, *Meletians*, *Luciferians*, &c. the Fathers inveigh againſt as no Chriſtians for their ſo unreaſonable raſh uncharitableneſs.

The *Romaniſts* at this day do all this, and yet nothing will ſerve them but the Name of *Catholicks*; but ſure it is the abſurdeſt one they could have took upon them. For Catholick is but another word for *Univerſal*, but theſe Anathematizers and would extirpate all that ſubmit not to their *particular*, who (notwithſtanding all their boaſt

of Universality) are in truth the major part of *Christendom.*

They tell us by their Emissaries we may, if we will, be reconciled; they are contented to be at peace with us. So did * *Nahash* condescend to the men of *Jabesh Gilead*, and vouchsafe to signifie the same thing to them; and in earnest, his were the civiller, fairer terms of the two: He would have been contented, if they would have parted but with one of their Eyes; but these will not, except we part with both ours, and all our other Senses.

* 1 Sam. 11. 2.

Christians of old did not deal so with one another: Every Church then, did not only think herself obliged to a charitable opinion of every other *holding the head*; but as they had opportunity, had actual communion with them. St. *Chrysostom* complaineth of *Theophilus* Bishop of *Alexandria*, because when he came to *Constantinople* *, he repaired not to the congregation after the usual manner to their Sermons, Prayers and Sacraments. And *Eusebius* taketh notice, that *Polycarp* when he came to *Rome*, tho' there were some other matters besides the controversie of *Easter*, they differed in, † communicated with *Anicetus*. And it was the general way when they were in other Coun-

* Οὐκ εἰς ἐκκλησίαν εἰσῆλθεν, καὶ τὸ εἰωθὸς καὶ τὸν ἄνωθεν κρατήσασα διαμόν. Chrys. Ep. Innoc.

† Ἐκοινώνησαν ἐκείνοις δὲ καὶ μετ' εἰρήνης ἀπ' ἀλλήλων ἀπηλλάγησαν, πάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐχόντων εἰρήνην, καὶ τῶν πατέρων, καὶ τῶν μὴ πατέρων. Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 5. c. 24.

tries, to apply themſelves to the Churches there, and joyn in their Worſhip with them.

Beſides theſe occaſional and accidental, there are other Duties this Spiritual Relation obligeth us to always. Theſe are to pray one for another, be tender one of another, ſympathize one with another, be helpful one to another: If grieved to comfort them, if in want to relieve them, if in danger to defend them, if perſecuted to ſuccour them, as far as is in our power.

I hope I need not preſs this on any of ours. If we, who by the bleſſing of God have ſo lately reaped the benefit of theſe Duties from others, ſhould be backward upon like occaſion, to expreſs them towards others, God and Man would reproach us for Diſingenuous. When we ſee the Members of Chriſt ſo dealt with, as many thouſands have been both in *France* and *Ireland*; ſo endangered, as all the Proteſtants in the Neighbour Nations at this day are, ſhould we ſhut up our bowels of compaſſion from them, with what face could we pretend to be of the Body? If we truly are, it will be impoſſible to be unconcerned at their troubles and afflictions; but we ſhall *remember them that are in Bonds as bound with them, and them that ſuffer adverſity, as we our ſelves being alſo*

in the body; be *weak when they are weak*, and *burn when they are offended.* That is the ſecond Caſe, how we ſhould behave our ſelves as members of the other Churches, diſtant from, and independent on us.

There remaineth the third, and that is relating to ſuch Chriſtians as upon diſſatisfaction divide, and will not joyn with us, how we ſhould carry our ſelves towards them? And this hath more difficulty in it, than either of the other; hard to be ſpoken of without extremes or offence; but when there are ſuch numbers of theſe among us, 'tis fit people ſhould know what they ought to do in it.

It is enough to ſtartle a very confident man to hear what the Fathers of the Church have declared about this matter. Conſidering the ill effects and conſequences of Schiſm, they have pronounced it as heinous a ſin as any whatſoever. [a] *Dionyſius* in his Epiſtle to *Novatus* ſaith *Idolatry* is not worſe. [b] *Optatus* not *Sacriledge* or *Murther*: and [c] St. *Auguſtine* upon occaſion of that paſſage out of St. *John*, they *went out from us, but were not of us*, declareth that they who are guilty of it are not to be looked upon as *Chriſtians.*

a Vide Euſe
Eccl. Hiſt.
c. 49.
b Deus pro n
lectu manda
iratus eſt ira
magna & q
in Sacrilego
& parricid
non fecerat i
Schiſmatico
cit. Optat. l.
c Unde Joha
nes ex nobis
trant, ſed n
evant ex no
non ait quod
exeundo alie
facti ſunt,
quod alieni
erant eos e
declaravit.
Aug. de Ba
15.

 This

This ſurely muſt be underſtood only of ſuch as hypocritically and maliciouſly make breaches and diſturbances in a Church, to revenge or advance themſelves by the ruine of it; for ſuch 'tis not eaſie to find expreſſions that are too ſevere or aggravating: But God forbid it ſhould be ſo with all who with-hold or withdraw from communion with a Church; of ſome we muſt *have compaſſion, making a difference.*

There are many (no doubt) who do this in the ſimplicity of their hearts, not apprehending the evil of it; for ſuch, as God doth, ſo we ought to make allowances: not rigorouſly treating, but *in meekneſs inſtructing them that ſo oppoſe themſelves.* The Apoſtle ſpeaking of ſuch as did not *obey his word,* 2 *Theſſ.* 3. and that not in matters of indifferent nature, but purely moral: tho he biddeth them *note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be aſhamed*; giveth this caution along with it, *v.* 15. *yet count him not as an enemy, but admoniſh him as a Brother.* And if that be the rule to be obſerved by us towards thoſe that are looſe and licentious, doubtleſs it will hold much ſtronger, towards thoſe that are only Weak and Scrupulous.

This is the likelieſt way to gain them; for look as gravely and pretend as highly as they will, people

people will never believe they have any kindneſs for their Souls, whom they find ſhowing ſpight to their perſons.

St. *Paul* having opened at large the *Unity* of *Chriſtians*, 1 *Cor.* 12. and in the laſt verſe of that Chapter exhorted them to *covet earneſtly the beſt gifts* that might promote that glorious end; addeth in the laſt words of it, *yet ſhow I unto you a more excellent way.* What? better than the beſt? A more excellent way than what? *v.* 25. he telleth us, than Apoſtles, than Prophets, than Teachers, than Governments, than Tongues, *&c.* he would ſhew them a more excellent way for keeping the unity of the body, than any, than all of them; and that is *Charity* and the grace of *Love:* which he diſcourſeth of, and magnifieth throughout the 13th Chapter, where he giveth us to underſtand, that without this, all extraordinary men, all miraculous gifts, all abilities to preach, all Eccleſiaſtical power, all prudence in government, (tho. uſeful in themſelves, and much contributing to it) would prove ineffectual. But where Charity and Love is, there we ſhall agree even when we differ; and if we are not ſo happy, as in nearneſs, yet at leaſt in tenderneſs, we ſhall be as *members one of another.*

Of

Of the things we have ſpoken this is the ſumm. That all that in every place call upon the name of Chriſt, being but *one body in him*; having the ſame relation to him their head, the ſame fundamentals of their common Faith, the ſame holy ends and intereſts to promote: ſhould not let leſſer matters hinder them from living *as members one of another.*

Now inaſmuch as to be a Member of the Catholick, it is neceſſary to be of ſome particular Church; if he may acceptably ſerve God and finally ſave his Soul in it, every Perſon ought for peace and order ſake to live in the Communion of that Church where the providence of God hath plac'd him, and not for every diſlike, defect, or blemiſh to depart from it.

Nor is it enough that we do this with that ſingle Church where we live; but inaſmuch as all other Chriſtian Churches abroad belong to the ſame Saviour; tho' they may differ in *Rituals*, in *Diſcipline*, yea in ſome *Doctrines* of inferiour nature from us; yet we ſhould all mutually own and acknowledge every one the other, as far as they own and acknowledge Chriſt.

And as for thoſe that ſeparate and divide themſelves; if they do it, not Hypocritically and Maliciouſly

liciously, with design to destroy the Body by tearing it so in pieces; but in the simplicity of their hearts, and real perswasion of their consciences: we should not any way unnecessarily offend, grieve or provoke: but show them as much compassion; forbearance and condescention, as is consistent with the safety and welfare of the Body.

All I shall add is but this one word relating to them we last mentioned. And that is, that tho' Christians should thus behave themselves towards those that so separate and divide from them; yet causeless separation and division is a great offence against the law of Christ. I would not have this so misconstrued, as if spoken from any repining at the indulgence, that is now granted the several Dissenters among us. For tho when it was an *illegal share*, the Clergy of this Church withstood it, with the hazard of their all, yet now it is a *legal ease*, I know none of them that are dissatisfied with it.

That which I mention this for, is only to admonish such Persons, and put them in mind that now they have *Liberty of Conscience*, they should make *Conscience of their Liberty*. Not presume and encourage themselves in it, because the Laws of the Land are so favourable to inflict no Penalties upon them for it. These do not undertake to justifie the

the thing, as if it were no Sin; only forbea
Judge in it, and leave us wholly to the Law
Christ, which is immutable and not to be repe
Seeing then we are all so far remitted to this
us all make this our Rule: and in the serious c
sideration of what this enjoyneth us, all fo
the things that make for peace, and the G
peace shall be with us.

FINIS.

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